

**Testimony On Behalf Of The
Connecticut Regional Office of the
Anti-Defamation League**

**IN SUPPORT OF
BILL NO. 899
AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE GUARANTEE OF EQUAL PROTECTION
UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE STATE FOR SAME SEX COUPLES**

March 6, 2009

The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) was founded in 1913 with a mandate to fight the defamation of the Jewish people and secure justice and fair treatment for all. Today the ADL is one of the country's leading civil rights and human services organizations. The Connecticut Regional Office of ADL is based in Hamden and serves the entire state of Connecticut.

We submit this testimony today to express our strong support for Bill 899, An Act Implementing the Guarantee of Equal Protection Under the Constitution of the State for Same Sex Couples.

In the *Kerrigan* case, the Connecticut Supreme Court ruled that the state constitution and long-standing principles of equal protection under the law require that people be entitled to marry the same sex partner of their choice, and that segregating heterosexual and homosexual couples into the separate institutions of marriage and civil unions violates those principles and protections.

We believe that the *Kerrigan* ruling was necessary to protect the rights of same-sex couples and their children. The secular status of marriage confers legal, social and financial benefits that are not otherwise available to citizens, and nothing short of marriage conveys the commitment, permanence or legitimacy of a relationship between two people. Whatever one's personal or religious beliefs about marriage, the reality is that same-sex couples form and raise hard-working families of many different faiths and backgrounds in Connecticut. We should ensure that all families, and all of our friends, relatives, co-workers, and neighbors have equal opportunities to plan their futures and organize their lives, and should not exclude families from these basic protections on the basis of sexual orientation, as we do not on the basis of race, religion or national origin.

As the United States Supreme Court said in its landmark decision in *Romer v Evans*, the American constitutional tradition does not use the law to single out any group for discriminatory treatment. Discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is as ugly as any other form of discrimination. Bill 899 ensures that the equal protection against discrimination provided by the Supreme Court in *Kerrigan* is incorporated into the Connecticut statutes, giving that protection the important force and impact of the legislative process.

We urge you to support Bill 899, ensuring that all in Connecticut are equally protected by the law, and that no one suffers discrimination based on their sexual orientation.